



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

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With many of the U. S. fishing fleet's newest and finest vessels off to war, numbers of older vessels have been rejuvenated and pressed into service to supply the Nation's vastly increased needs for fish. In the Atlantic Coast's great menhaden fishery six of the vessels now operating are well past the sixty-year mark.

Oldest vessel now working in the menhaden fleet, according to a report to Coordinator of Fisheries Harold L. Ickes, is the Joseph H. Davis which was built in 1876. It operates in Chesapeake Bay.

Others are the David K. Phillips, the John L. Lawrence, and the Luce Brothers, all built in 1877, and the Peconic and the Sterling which were launched in 1879.

All six of the vessels have been rebuilt several times and are now equipped with diesel engines in place of their original steam equipment.

Operating out of Lewes, Delaware, the Sterling, the Luce Brothers, and the John L. Lawrence have been coming in with solid deck loads of menhaden for the past month. The other three vessels are now in service in the Chesapeake Bay, one of the most important fishing grounds for menhaden on the Atlantic Coast.

The chief products of the menhaden fishery are meal and oil, although small quantities are now being canned in Florida. The annual catch amounts to about half a billion pounds.

The old vessels, as well as the balance of the menhaden fleet, face a more difficult job this year than ever before, according to the Coordinator of Fisheries. Sharply increased quantities of oil and meal are needed to supply feeds for hogs and poultry and for vital industrial uses. With many of the newer and more efficient menhaden boats taken over by the Navy, the demand for more fish places a heavier burden on this year's severely depleted fleet.

Although last year's production of fish meal of all kinds was only 160,000 tons, the quantity needed this year has been set at 265,000 tons. In 1942 production of pilchard meal amounted to 72,000 tons, while 51,000 tons of menhaden were processed.

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Because the need for canned fish may divert more pilchards than usual to canning, the Coordinator doubted that production of pilchard meal would exceed last year's figure. Therefore, even if the reduced menhaden fleet is able to catch as many fish as last year (about 500,000,000 pounds), the shortage of fish meal will remain acute.